

# Illegal activities at park damage environment

By Cecilia Chan

CECILIA.CHAN@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

Lake Pleasant Regional Park is seeing an increase in foot traffic, as development closes in on the outdoor recreation area, and that jump in traffic is spurring more problems.

Last year, the park recorded 443 watercraft and 2,685 autos that paid for entry to the Agua Fria conservation area, said Dawna Taylor, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department spokeswoman.

Taylor said a cleanup a couple of months ago resulted in 32 tons of trash hauled from the site.

"We got people doing ATVs, off-highway vehicles, going back there tearing up the desert," she said.

"Some are doing illegal shooting there. By removing the vehicles, which are not supposed to be there, it re-

moves the other activities from taking place.

"We want to make sure the public is safe as well as protect the environment."

The conservation area also experienced degradation of cultural sites, including petroglyphs that have been either damaged or stolen, open campfires and woodcutting.

A multi-agency task force, led by the Bureau of Reclamation, has been meeting to determine the best short- and long-term solutions for the area. BLM owns the land but the county manages it.

The Agua Fria Conservation Area was designated as a conservation area with limited access and development in order to preserve the riparian areas.

Taylor, who said public feedback is welcome, added that the task force has no deadline to complete its work.

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**Dawna Taylor**

County parks spokeswoman